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SUBJECT: PREVAL SAYS CARICOM WILL SUPPORT VENEZUELA FOR
UNSC SEAT

Classified By: Ambassador Janet Sanderson for reason 1.4 (b/d).

1. (C) Summary: President Preval asserted to A/S Shannon July 25 that CARICOM had adopted a common position in support of Venezuela's bid for a UNSC seat. Preval judged that Guyana had softened its opposition to Venezuela, clearing the way for a CARICOM consensus. Shannon explained that Guatemala, a small state that plays a constructive role in the international community represents a more qualified candidate than Venezuela which, has demonstrated it is a disruptive force in international institutions. He urged Preval to consider Haiti's position carefully and to support Guatemala. Preval made no commitments, and lamented that "this is a fight between big boys" that Haiti would prefer to avoid. End summary.

2. (C) At the end of a wide-ranging meeting on other topics July 25 (septel), WHA A/S Shannon asked President Preval for Haiti's position on the open GRULAC seat on the Security Council. Clearly uncomfortable, Preval abruptly changed the topic for several minutes before finally asserting that CARICOM had decided on a common position in support of Venezuela.

3. (C) A/S Shannon recalled that CARICOM had not taken a formal position on the UNSC race, but rather set criteria for its decision. Preval insisted that indeed there is a consensus, although he described it as one of "very reserved support for Venezuela." He said that Belize continued to object to Guatemala because of their border dispute, while Guyana had now softened its opposition to Venezuela. Preval said that Guatemala's position on banana exports also had been an important factor in CARICOM's decision to back Venezuela. Preval quipped that CARICOM's position "had nothing to do with Petrocaribe," and laughed.

4. (C) Shannon pointed out that it is unfortunate that a decision on UNSC representation that should be made within the GRULAC will instead be made by the entire General Assembly. The U.S. thought that Guatemala had been well-positioned to win support. It is a small country in a region in which such countries have had few opportunities to serve on the UNSC. It has extensive experience with the UN through its own peace process and collaboration on economic development. Guatemala also hosts a peacekeeping training center and has contributed to PKOs worldwide, recently losing eight peacekeepers in Congo. Guatemala has a record of commitment to the UN, to democracy, and to human rights. In contrast, Venezuela offers none of this. Instead, it tries to use international institutions to advance its own narrow agenda.

5. (C) Preval joked awkwardly that Venezuelan President

Hugo Chavez is the "best friend" of the United States because he has frightened voters in democracies elsewhere in the Americas to reject populist candidates. Shannon explained that Guatemala had the support of the North and Central American countries, while Venezuela had the South American countries, with the Caribbean perhaps split. As a result, the rest of the world would effectively choose this hemisphere's representative on the Council. Shannon sketched a scenario in which votes for the UNSC seat will split the world into two broad camps: democracies in Europe, Asia, and Africa backing Guatemala, while tyrannies in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East support Venezuela. Shannon underscored that the UNGA vote will be by secret ballot. He said that CARICOM countries should vote independently and urged that Haiti carefully consider its position and support Guatemala.

¶6. (C) Preval made no commitment. He lamented that "this is a fight between big boys" that Haiti would prefer to avoid. His principal advisor, Bob Manuel, took careful notes throughout the discussion, particularly as Shannon presented the arguments in favor of a vote for Guatemala.

¶7. (C) Comment: Preval will try to avoid breaking what he believes is a CARICOM consensus in favor of Venezuela, when Haiti only returned to full member status in the organization earlier in the month after a two-year gap. Nevertheless, he also realizes that his most important donors have lined up in support of Guatemala's candidacy. We will continue to encourage Preval to weigh the importance of this vote for the good order of the UNSC and the UN Mission deployed in Haiti. Given his inherent caution, we expect that he will pursue what he perceives the safest course--probably an abstention.
SANDERSON